



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Cristina Polsgrove
Environmental Services
(520) 791-3175

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TTY: (520) 791-2639
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Patti Woodcock
Pima County Health Dept.
(520) 243-7701

Don Cassano
Government and Community Affairs Director
Waste Management of Arizona, Inc.
(602) 454-2045

CITY & COUNTY URGE SAFE NEEDLE DISPOSAL

The City of Tucson's Environmental Services Department, Pima County Department of Environmental Quality, and the Pima County Health Department are promoting safe disposal methods for needles and syringes to reduce the risk of injury to refuse and recycling center employees, as well as city and county residents. Needles and syringes are hazardous medical waste and should be disposed of properly. These should NEVER be placed in the blue barrels or other recycling containers.

Over the past year, recycling facility employees have been injured by needles that were placed with other recyclables delivered by City of Tucson and Pima County waste haulers to the Recycle America, Waste Management facility. In addition to the resulting physical injury, the employees are at risk of infection from viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis. As a result, "these injuries are much more complicated than just the physical injury," said Don Cassano, Government and Community Affairs Director, Waste Management, Inc. "These workers also suffer from anxiety and fear of developing AIDS or Hepatitis," says Cassano. "It takes months of medical testing to rule these out, and that's a long time for someone to have to worry about what may happen to them."

It is critical to public health and safety that needles and syringes are disposed of properly and safely. Needle stick injuries to municipal workers on the job, or to the public, are easily preventable. To reduce the risk of needle stick injuries, the City of Tucson and Pima County are asking residents to dispose of needles and syringes in the following manner:

- Place all needles and syringes in a secured puncture proof plastic container with a screw-on lid (e.g.: 2 liter bottle or rigid detergent bottle).
- Clearly label the container "NON-RECYCLABLE" and dispose of it in your trash container.
- Never put needles or syringes in the blue barrels or other recycling containers.
- Do not use a glass container.
- Keep your container out of reach of children and pets.
- Never put loose needles in your trash or recycling container.
- Never flush needles or syringes down the toilet.

For more information, please contact City of Tucson Environmental Services at 791-3171, Pima County Department of Environmental Quality at 740-3340, Pima County Health Department at 243-7701 or talk with your health care provider.